

Gender Specific Services for Girls

Section 223(8)(B) of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, as Amended (JJDP Act) requires that states receiving formula grant funding analyze gender specific services for the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency, including the types of such services available and the need for such services for females and develop a plan for providing needed services.

Research suggests that effective programs for girls must meet several criteria in order to provide effective services. The Valentine Foundation, a charitable foundation that makes grants available to qualifying tax-exempt organizations, places emphasis on several factors to be considered in developing programs and services for girls (Valentine Foundation and Women's Way, 1990), advising programs to do the following:

- ◆ Ask girls who they are, what their lives are like, and what they need.
- ◆ Allow girls to speak up and actively participate in the services they receive.
- ◆ Assist girls with their family relationships and help them deal with family issues.
- ◆ Maintain a diverse staff who reflect the girls served.
- ◆ Weave a multicultural perspective through programming.
- ◆ Teach girls coping strategies to overcome domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse, and substance abuse.
- ◆ Understand that relationships are central to girls' lives. Assist girls in maintaining important connections without sacrificing themselves to their relationships.
- ◆ Connect girls with at least one capable and non-exploitive adult for an ongoing supportive relationship.

- ◆ Promote academic achievement and economic self-sufficiency for girls.
- ◆ Assist girls in becoming grounded in some form of spirituality.
- ◆ Allow staff more time and opportunity for building trusting relationships with girls.
- ◆ Allow girls the safety and comfort of same-gender environments.
- ◆ Provide girls with mentors who reflect girls' lives and who model survival, growth, and change.
- ◆ Assist girls with childcare, transportation, and safe housing issues

Case managers need special traits to succeed in supervising an all-girl caseload. They must:

- ◆ Enjoy working with girls.
- ◆ Be willing to "go the extra mile."
- ◆ Have an open mind.
- ◆ Be comfortable with their own sexuality.
- ◆ Be nurturers.
- ◆ Serve as role models.
- ◆ Be able to focus on the positive aspects of a girl's life.
- ◆ Provide a safe and supportive environment to assist in the healing process.